

Sound Stewardship—Using Citizen-based Restoration Monitoring as a Tool for Adaptive Management

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Abstract

Efforts to restore estuary wetland habitat in the region have been limited historically and suffered from poor public support. Challenges of restoring estuary wetlands in urban areas are amplified due to the small size and isolation of restoration parcels, and continued disturbance from development and invasive species. People For Puget Sound has developed a program to both encourage citizen adoption of restoration sites and to ensure adaptive management. By recruiting site stewards who report on the overall health of individual restoration sites on a monthly basis we are able to accurately track and remedy emerging problems such as trampling, desiccation, predation and debris removal. Intensive plant monitoring during the summer growing season is used to track and document the growth and composition of wetland and riparian vegetation, and identify invasive species problems. Annual monitoring is valuable for identifying and remedying flaws in site management and provide feedback on site design. Both types of monitoring play a critical role in helping site managers effectively respond to the needs of individual restoration sites. In addition to the benefits provided by economically monitoring and stewarding these sites, this program has resulted in a supportive constituency that understands the importance and challenges of restoring estuarine wetlands.